



**Free concert
programme**

London Philharmonic★ Orchestra



**2025/26 season
at the
Southbank Centre**



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RESIDENT

London Philharmonic Orchestra

Principal Conductor Edward Gardner supported by Aud Jebsen

Principal Guest Conductor Karina Canellakis supported by Richard Buxton

Conductor Emeritus Vladimir Jurowski KBE **Patron** HRH The Duke of Kent KG

Artistic Director Jesús Herrera **Chief Executive** David Burke

Leader Pieter Schoeman supported by Neil Westreich

Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall

Wednesday 22 October 2025 | 6.30pm

The Rite of Spring

L Boulanger

D'un matin de printemps (6')

L Boulanger

Faust et Hélène (32')

Interval (20')

Stravinsky

The Rite of Spring (32')

Karina Canellakis conductor

Generously supported by Richard Buxton

Véronique Gens soprano (*Hélène*)

Andrew Staples tenor (*Faust*)

Jean-Sébastien Bou baritone (*Méphistophélès*)

With support from the ABO Trust's Sirens programme



Part of



The timings shown are not precise and are given only as a guide.
Concert presented by the London Philharmonic Orchestra

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**SOUTHBANK
CENTRE**
RESIDENT



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Welcome

Welcome to the Southbank Centre

We're the UK's largest centre for the arts and one of the nation's top five visitor attractions, showcasing the world's most exciting artists at our venues in the heart of London. As a charity, we bring millions of people together by opening up the unique art spaces that we care for.

The Southbank Centre is made up of the Royal Festival Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Purcell Room, Hayward Gallery, National Poetry Library and Arts Council Collection. We're one of London's favourite meeting spots, with lots of free events and places to relax, eat and shop next to the Thames.

We hope you enjoy your visit. If you need any information or help, please ask a member of staff. You can also email hello@southbankcentre.co.uk or write to us at Southbank Centre, Belvedere Road, London SE1 8XX.

Subscribers to our email updates are the first to hear about new events, offers and competitions. Just head to our website to sign up.

LPO news

Just announced: 'The Nature Dialogues'

As part of this season's *Harmony with Nature* theme, some of today's leading scientists and storytellers – including Kate Humble, Liz Bonnin and Jeremy Wade – will join us throughout the season for a fascinating series of free pre-concert talks at the Southbank Centre. From stars to storms, and wildlife to oceans, *The Nature Dialogues* invite you to explore the wonders of the natural world and discover fresh perspectives on this season's music.

Turn to page 9 for full details. Find out more and book your free tickets at lpo.org.uk/harmony-with-nature

New on the LPO Label: Karina Canellakis conducts Tchaikovsky



We're thrilled to have our Principal Guest Conductor Karina Canellakis with us this week, for two concerts here at the Royal Festival Hall and one at our Saffron Hall residency. This Friday also sees Karina's first full album release on the LPO's own label:

a pairing of Tchaikovsky's Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, recorded live in concert at the Royal Festival Hall (see page 8).

Karina will be back on 18 February 2026, when she returns to conduct the Orchestra in Beethoven's Symphony No. 7 and Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto with soloist Anne-Sophie Mutter, followed by a seven-city European tour.

Printed with the planet in mind

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On stage tonight

First Violins

Alice Ivy-Pemberton Leader
Kate Oswin

Chair supported by Eric Tomsett

Lasma Taimina
Chair supported by Irina Gofman &
Mr Rodrik V. G. Cave

Yang Zhang
Katalin Varnagy
Martin Höhmnn
Sylvain Vasseur
Grace Lee
Amanda Smith
Tom Aldren
Ruth Schulten
Alison Strange
Beatriz Carbonell
Camille Buitenhuys
Tayfun Bomboz
Daniel Pukach

Second Violins

Tania Mazzetti Principal
Chair supported by The Candide Trust
Emma Oldfield Co-Principal

Nancy Elan
Kate Birchall
Joseph Maher
Sophie Phillips
Chair supported by Friends of the
Orchestra

Marie-Anne Mairesse
Sioni Williams
Vera Beumer
Sarah Thornett
Kate Cole
Lyrit Milgram
Sheila Law
Emma Purslow

Violas

Shira Majoni Guest Principal
Stephanie Block
Laura Vallejo
Katharine Leek
Benedetto Pollani
Jenny Poyser
Alistair Scahill
Jill Valentine
Mark Gibbs
Rachel Robson
Charlie Cross
Martin Fenn

Cellos

Kristina Blaumane Principal
Chair supported by Bianca & Stuart
Roden

Henry Shapard Co-Principal
David Lale
Sibylle Hentschel
Leo Melvin
Miguel Ángel Villeda Cerón
Tom Roff
Iain Ward
Pedro Silva
Deni Teo

Double Basses

Kevin Rundell* Principal
Hugh Kluger
George Peniston
Tom Walley
Chair supported by William & Alex
de Winton

Lowri Estell
Elen Roberts
Ben Havinden-Williams
Sam Rice

Flutes

Frederico Paixão
Guest Principal
Anna Kondrashina
Sofia Castillo
Marta Santamaria

Piccolos

Stewart McIlwham* Principal
Marta Santamaria

Alto Flute

Stewart McIlwham*

Oboes

Tom Blomfield Guest Principal
Alice Munday
Chair supported by David & Yi Buckley
Hannah Condliffe
Lauren Weavers

Cors Anglais

Sue Böhling* Principal
Chair supported by Dr Barry Grimaldi
Lauren Weavers

Clarinets

Benjamin Mellefont* Principal
Chair supported by Sir Nigel
Boardman & Prof. Lynda Gratton

Thomas Watmough
Bethany Crouch
James Maltby

E-flat Clarinet

Thomas Watmough Principal
Chair supported by Roger Greenwood

Bass Clarinets

Paul Richards* Principal
James Maltby

Bassoons

Jonathan Davies* Principal
Chair supported by Sir Simon Robey
Helen Storey*
Lorna West
Gareth Twigg

Contrabassoons

Simon Estell* Principal
Gareth Twigg

Horns

Annemarie Federle Principal
Chair supported by Victoria Robey CBE
Martin Hobbs
Mark Vines Co-Principal
Gareth Mollison
Roger Montgomery
Elise Campbell
Kristina Yumerska
Meilyr Hughes
Alec Ross

Wagner Tubas

Mark Vines
Martin Hobbs

Trumpets

Tom Nielsen* Principal
Juan Martinez Guest Principal
Anne McAneney*
David Hilton
Tom Watts

Piccolo Trumpet

Tom Nielsen*

Cornets

Tom Nielsen*
David Hilton

Bass Trumpet

David Whitehouse

Trombones

Mark Templeton* Principal
Chair supported by William & Alex
de Winton
Tom Berry

Bass Trombone

Lyndon Meredith Principal

Tubas

Lee Tsarmaklis* Principal
Chair supported by William & Alex
de Winton
James Tavares

Timpani

Simon Carrington* Principal
Chair supported by Victoria Robey CBE
Ignacio Molins

Percussion

Andrew Barclay* Principal
Chair supported by Gill & Garf Collins
Karen Hutt Co-Principal
Oliver Yates
Feargus Brennan

Harps

Rosanna Rolton
Guest Principal
Tomos Xerri

Celeste

Catherine Edwards

Assistant Conductor

Nefeli Chadouli

**Professor at a London
conservatoire*

The LPO also acknowledges the following chair supporters whose players are not present at this concert:

An anonymous donor | Dr Alex & Maria Chan | Ian Ferguson & Susan Tranter | David & Bettina Harden | Ryze Power
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London Philharmonic Orchestra



© Mark Allan

Uniquely groundbreaking and exhilarating to watch and hear, the London Philharmonic Orchestra has been celebrated as one of the world's great orchestras since Sir Thomas Beecham founded it in 1932. Our mission is to share wonder with the modern world through the power of orchestral music, which we accomplish through live performances, online, and an extensive education and community programme, cementing our position as a leading orchestra for the 21st century.

Our home is at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall, where we're at the beating heart of London's cultural life. You'll also find us at our resident venues in Brighton, Eastbourne and Saffron Walden, and on tour worldwide. In 2024 we celebrated 60 years as Resident Symphony Orchestra at Glyndebourne Festival Opera, combining the magic of opera with Glyndebourne's glorious setting in the Sussex countryside.

Soundtrack to key moments

Everyone will have heard the Grammy-nominated London Philharmonic Orchestra, whether it's playing the world's National Anthems for every medal ceremony of the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics, our iconic recording with Pavarotti that made *Nessun Dorma* a global football anthem, or closing the flotilla at The Queen's Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant. And you'll almost certainly have heard us on the soundtracks for major films including *The Lord of the Rings*.

Sharing the wonder worldwide

We're one of the world's most-streamed orchestras, with over 15 million plays of our content each month. In 2023 we were the most successful orchestra worldwide on YouTube, TikTok and Instagram, and in 2024 we featured in a TV documentary series on Sky Arts: 'Backstage with the London Philharmonic Orchestra', which was nominated for a 2025 BAFTA. During 2025/26 we're once again working with Marquee TV to broadcast selected live concerts to enjoy at home.

Our conductors

Our Principal Conductors have included some of the greatest historic names like Sir Adrian Boult, Bernard Haitink, Klaus Tennstedt and Kurt Masur. In 2021 Edward Gardner became our 13th Principal Conductor, and Vladimir Jurowski became Conductor Emeritus. Karina Canellakis is our current Principal Guest Conductor, and Sir George Benjamin our Composer-in-Residence.

Next generations

We're committed to nurturing the next generation of musicians and music-lovers: we love seeing the joy of children and families experiencing their first musical moments, and we're passionate about inspiring schools and teachers through dedicated concerts, workshops, resources and training. Reflecting our values of

Alice Ivy-Pemberton

Leader

collaboration and inclusivity, our OrchLab and Open Sound Ensemble projects offer music-making opportunities for adults and young people with disabilities and special educational needs.

Today's young instrumentalists are the orchestra members of the future, and we have a number of opportunities to support their progression. Our LPO Junior Artists programme leads the way in creating pathways into the profession for young artists from under-represented communities, and our LPO Young Composers and Foyle Future Firsts schemes support the next generation of professional musicians, bridging the transition from education to professional careers. We also recently launched the LPO Conducting Fellowship, supporting the development of two outstanding early-career conductors from backgrounds under-represented in the profession.

2025/26 season

This season's theme, *Harmony with Nature*, explores humanity's bond with the natural world through works by Beethoven, Sibelius, Mendelssohn, Elgar and Dvořák; masterpieces of an era that saw nature as a mirror of human emotion. Closer to our own time, we'll hear from composers as diverse as Duke Ellington, John Luther Adams and Anna Thorvaldsdottir, who have all found a source of creative energy in the processes of nature.

Highlights with Principal Conductor Edward Gardner include symphonies by Tchaikovsky, Mahler, Brahms and Rachmaninov; a pair of concerts spotlighting 20th-century Central European composers; an evening dedicated to Elgar; and a performance of Berg's *Wozzeck* to end the season. We'll also welcome back Karina Canellakis and Vladimir Jurowski, as well as guest conductors including Robin Ticciati, Kirill Karabits, Mark Elder and Elim Chan. Our lineup of soloists this season includes violinists Anne-Sophie Mutter, Alina Ibragimova, James Ehnes and Himari; cellist Sheku Kanneh-Mason; and pianists Yefim Bronfman, Alexandre Kantorow and Tomoko Mukaiyama. The season features nine world and UK premieres, including Tan Dun's choral 'Ode to Peace' *Nine*, and *A Tale of God's Will (A Requiem for Katrina)* by jazz icon Terence Blanchard.

We're also looking forward to tours to South Korea and across Europe, as well as another season bursting with performances and community events in our Brighton, Eastbourne and Saffron Walden residencies.



Alice Ivy-Pemberton joined the London Philharmonic Orchestra as Co-Leader in February 2023.

Praised by *The New York Times* for her 'sweet-toned playing', Alice has performed as a soloist, chamber and orchestral musician to international acclaim. While growing up in New York City and studying with Nurit Pacht, Alice made a nationally televised Carnegie Hall debut aged ten, and was a finalist at the Menuhin International Competition at the age of 12.

Alice earned her Bachelors and Masters degrees at The Juilliard School under the tutelage of Itzhak Perlman and Catherine Cho as a fully-funded recipient of the Kovner Fellowship. During her studies she won Juilliard's Violin Concerto Competition, performed extensively with the New York Philharmonic and The Philadelphia Orchestra, and led orchestras under the baton of Barbara Hannigan, Xian Zhang and Matthias Pintscher. Upon graduating in 2022 she was awarded the Polisi Prize and a Benzaquen Career Advancement Grant in recognition of 'tremendous talent, promise, creativity, and potential to make a significant impact in the performing arts'.

An avid chamber musician, Alice has collaborated with Itzhak Perlman, Anthony Marwood, Gil Shaham and members of the Belcea, Doric, Juilliard and Brentano string quartets, and performed with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. Festival appearances include Music@Menlo, Moritzburg and Yellow Barn. Also a passionate advocate for new music and its social relevance, Alice created *Drowning Monuments*, a noted multimedia project on climate change that brought together five world premieres for solo violin.

Karina Canellakis

Principal Guest Conductor, London Philharmonic Orchestra

© Marco Borggreve



Internationally acclaimed for her symphonic and operatic performances characterised by interpretive depth, refinement and emotional impact, Karina Canellakis is welcomed by the finest musical institutions across the globe. She has been Principal Guest Conductor of the London Philharmonic Orchestra since 2021, and is also Chief Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra.

Following tonight's concert, Karina and the LPO will perform at Saffron Hall this Friday (24 October) and return to the Royal Festival Hall on Saturday (25 October) with a programme including Rachmaninov's Symphony No. 2 and Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 25 with soloist Paul Lewis. On 18 February 2026 she returns to the Royal Festival Hall stage to conduct the Orchestra in Beethoven's Symphony No. 7 and Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto with soloist Anne-Sophie Mutter, followed by a seven-city European tour.

This Friday sees Karina's first full album release on the LPO's own label: a pairing of Tchaikovsky's Fifth and Sixth Symphonies, recorded live in concert at the Royal Festival Hall (LPO-0137, released Friday 24 October – see page 8).

As Chief Conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic, this season Karina programmes and leads a range of newly commissioned works alongside great masterworks at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw and the TivoliVredenburg in Utrecht. Other 2025/26 highlights include her debut with the Vienna Philharmonic at the Mozartwoche Salzburg; and her debut at the Hamburg State Opera with Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* and Zemlinsky's *A Florentine Tragedy*. She returns this season to the Swedish Radio Symphony, Vienna

Symphony, Chicago Symphony and San Francisco Symphony orchestras, and will also make her debut with the Orchestre de la Suisse Romande in Geneva.

Karina conducts at least one opera-in-concert each season with the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra at the Concertgebouw, and in March 2026 will lead Britten's *Peter Grimes* featuring Allan Clayton in the title role.

2023 saw the start of a multi-album collaboration between Karina, the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic and Pentatone, with their debut release, Bartók's *Concerto for Orchestra* and *Four Orchestral Pieces*, earning a Grammy nomination. Her second album for Pentatone, Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*, was released in April 2025 to glowing international reviews.

Karina has developed close relationships with several of the world's leading orchestras, regularly returning to the Bavarian Radio Symphony, Orchestre de Paris, Vienna Symphony and Munich Philharmonic, and top American orchestras such as the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Boston, Chicago, and San Francisco symphonies, and the Cleveland and Philadelphia Orchestras. She was Principal Guest Conductor of the Berlin Radio Symphony Orchestra from 2019–23, and in 2023/24 was Artist-in-Residence at Vienna's Musikverein.

Already known to many in the classical music world as a virtuoso violinist, Karina grew up in New York City. She was encouraged to become a conductor by Sir Simon Rattle while playing in the Berlin Philharmonic as a member of the Karajan-Akademie. She spent several years performing as a soloist, guest leader and chamber musician, until conducting eventually took over after she won the Sir Georg Solti Award in 2016.

Véronique Gens

soprano (*Hélène*)



© Jean-Baptiste Miliot

Véronique Gens is one of France's best-loved sopranos, enjoying a distinguished career in opera, concert, recitals and recordings. This is her debut with the London Philharmonic Orchestra.

Véronique's recent and upcoming appearances include Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées; Emilia Marty in *The Makropulos Case* at the Opéra de Lille; Madame Lidoine in *Dialogues des Carmélites* at the Bavarian State Opera and the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées; *La Mort de Cléopâtre* at the Tiroler Festspiele; Giulietta in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* at La Fenice; Clitemnestre in *Iphigénie en Aulide* at the Aix-en-Provence Festival and Greek National Opera; and the title role in Charpentier's *Médée* with Les Arts Florissants at the Teatro Real in Madrid.

One of the defining roles of Véronique's career was Donna Elvira in Peter Brook's production of *Don Giovanni*, conducted by Claudio Abbado at the 1998 Aix-en-Provence Festival – a performance that brought her international acclaim. Her repertoire comprises many further leading Mozart roles (Contessa Almaviva, Vitellia, Fiordiligi) and the great roles of *tragédie lyrique* (including *Iphigénie en Tauride*, *Iphigénie en Aulide*, *Armide* and *Alceste*), as well as heroines of later periods including Alice Ford in *Falstaff*; Eva in *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*; Agathe in *Der Freischütz* and Hanna Glawari in *The Merry Widow*. She has performed on the world's foremost operatic stages including the Opéra national de Paris, Royal Opera House, Vienna State Opera, Bavarian State Opera, Berlin State Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, La Monnaie, Liceu in Barcelona, Teatro Real in Madrid and Dutch National Opera, as well as at the Aix-en-Provence, Baden-Baden, Salzburg and Glyndebourne festivals.

Andrew Staples

tenor (*Faust*)



Andrew Staples is a renowned tenor and director whose career spans leading opera houses, major orchestras and innovative film projects. As a singer, he has performed with many of the world's foremost conductors and orchestras including Sir Simon Rattle, Daniel Harding, Klaus Mäkelä and Gustavo Dudamel, and the Berlin Philharmonic, Vienna Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic and Orchestre de Paris. He has appeared at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, the Metropolitan Opera, the Berlin State Opera, the Salzburg Festival, La Monnaie Brussels and the Lucerne Festival.

Andrew appeared with the LPO as a soloist in Mahler's *Das Lied von der Erde* in 2022, and in April 2025 returned to sing the role of Doctor Marianus in Mahler's Symphony No. 8, both at the Royal Festival Hall under Edward Gardner.

Andrew's 2025/26 season highlights include *Faust et Hélène* with both the London Philharmonic Orchestra and the Vienna Symphony; Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with the Orchestre de Paris, Haydn's *The Creation* with the Orchestra dell'Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia, and Britten's *War Requiem* with both The Cleveland Orchestra and the Berlin Philharmonic.

As a film and stage director, Andrew has collaborated with Joyce DiDonato, Kevin Puts and Daniel Harding, creating music films and documentaries for Apple/Platoon, Arte, Medici TV and others. His film *Nocturne*, with pianist Alice Sara Ott, won Audiovisual Music Production of the Year at the 2025 Opus Klassik Awards. In 2025/26 he directs *Emily – No Prisoner Be* by Kevin Puts for Joyce DiDonato and Time for Three, premiering at the Bregenz Festival.

Jean-Sébastien Bou

baritone (*Méhistophélès*)



© MatejaLux

After studying with Mady Mesplé and later at the Conservatoire National Supérieur de Musique de Paris, Jean-Sébastien Bou's career quickly took off in Europe.

He established himself in the French repertoire with the title roles in *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Werther* and *Hamlet*, as well as Valentin (*Faust*), Escamillo (*Carmen*) and the four demons in *The Tales of Hoffman*. Today, his eclectic repertoire ranges from the Baroque to 20th-century (Farfarello in *The Love for Three Oranges*, Tarquinus in *The Rape of Lucretia*) and contemporary works (Thierry Escaich's *Claude*, *Shirine* and *Point d'orgue*, and Pascal Dusapin's *Il Viaggio*, *Dante* at the Aix-en-Provence Festival). He also regularly performs Italian repertoire (Malatesta in *Don Pasquale*, Marcello in *La bohème*, Sharpless in *Madam Butterfly*), Mozart (title role in *Don Giovanni*, Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte*), as well as Rossini's Figaro, Raimbaud and Guillaume Tell, and the title role in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*.

Tonight's concert is Jean-Sébastien Bou's debut with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Other highlights this season include *The Tales of Hoffman* at the Opéra Comique, *Benvenuto Cellini* at La Monnaie in Brussels, *La traviata* at the Opéra de Nice, and Thierry Escaich's *Point d'orgue* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées. On the concert stage, he appears in Meyerbeer's *Le Prophète* with the Geneva Chamber Orchestra, and Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges* with the Barcelona Symphony Orchestra.

Out this week on the LPO Label



Tchaikovsky
Symphony No. 5
Symphony No. 6

Karina Canellakis conductor
London Philharmonic Orchestra

Released Friday 24 October

Find out more or pre-order:



*'The decision to appoint
Canellakis was a stroke of
genius on the LPO's part – her
rapport with the Orchestra
grows stronger with every
collaboration – and she never
fails to bring out the best in
her players.'*

Music OMH ★★★★★

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buy on CD, and to download or stream via
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lpo.org.uk/recordings

Harmony with Nature

Tonight's works and our 2025/26 season theme

This season, we invite audiences to join us in exploring one of the most urgent conversations of our time – our relationship with the natural world – through the power of music. We'll marvel at oceans, forests, caves, mountains and wildlife through works by Beethoven, Sibelius, Mendelssohn, Elgar and Dvořák; masterpieces of an era that saw nature as a mirror of human emotion – but also, perhaps, experienced it more immediately and organically than in the digital age.

Closer to our own time, voices as diverse as Duke Ellington, John Luther Adams, Gustavo Díaz-Jerez and Anna Thorvaldsdóttir have all found an unquenchable source of creative energy in the processes of nature, from river deltas to volcanic eruptions. For composers such as Anna Korsun, Gabriela Lena Frank and Terence Blanchard (whose powerful meditation on the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina receives its UK premiere), humanity enters the picture. As destroyer or protector? Or simply as an organic, inextricable part of nature itself?

Throughout the season, we'll also be partnering with local environmental organisations, and welcoming a host of pre-concert speakers (see right), as we attempt to use the power of classical music to encourage environmental stewardship. We hope you'll join us!

Check out the full season at
lpo.org.uk/harmony-with-nature

Just announced: 'The Nature Dialogues'

Today's leading scientists and storytellers illuminate the natural world in a fascinating series of pre-concert talks. Free and open to all, 'The Nature Dialogues' invite you to delve deeper into the wonders of nature and discover a fresh perspective on this season's music. Book your free tickets at lpo.org.uk

Friday 31 October 2025 | 6pm | Royal Festival Hall **Harmony with our Oceans**

With wildlife biologist & broadcaster Liz Bonnin and physicist & oceanographer Helen Czerski

Saturday 29 November 2025 | 6pm | Royal Festival Hall **Harmony with Distant Planets**

With composer Robert Laidlow and astronomer David Kipping

Saturday 17 January 2026 | 5pm | Royal Festival Hall **Harmony with the Volcanic World**

With broadcaster & writer Kate Humble

Saturday 21 March 2026 | 5pm | Queen Elizabeth Hall **Harmony with our Rivers**

With extreme angler, author & broadcaster Jeremy Wade

Wednesday 8 April 2026 | 6pm | Royal Festival Hall **Harmony with our Fragile Earth**

With scientist Johan Rockström, environmentalist Tony Juniper and composer Anna Thorvaldsdóttir

Friday 17 April 2026 | 6pm | Royal Festival Hall **Harmony with our Changing Planet**

With social scientist Gail Whiteman

Nature's voice in tonight's programme

Tonight's concert is framed by two strikingly different visions of spring, written just five years apart. We begin with Lili Boulanger's *D'un matin de printemps*, a brief but radiant evocation of a spring morning. Its colourful, graceful textures capture the freshness of nature's awakening, yet behind its brilliance lies an awareness of transience: Boulanger's fragile health and tragically short life – she died at the age of just 24 – give the music an all-too fleeting radiance.

After the interval comes Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*, a work that turned the musical world on its head. Here, spring is not gentle but elemental, channelling the forces of nature through raw rhythms, jagged melodies and ritualistic energy. From birdlike woodwind calls to pounding chords that evoke feet stamping against soil, the music captures both the fertility of the earth and humanity's ancient bond with the cycles of nature.

Programme notes

Lili Boulanger

1893–1918

D'un matin de printemps (On a morning in spring)

1918



Lili Boulanger's music is like no other. Though perhaps not 'the first important woman composer' her sister Nadia declared her to be, she is certainly important for the extraordinary inspiration that arose from the unhappy situation she was in. It is true that she had no effect on the course of musical history, except perhaps in that she stimulated Nadia Boulanger to embark on what was to be a long and internationally influential career as a teacher of composition. It is also true that on her death at the age of 24, Lili had fulfilled little of her potential. On the other hand, no other composer has died so young and achieved so much.

It was, in fact, Lili's suffering from almost permanent ill-health and the awareness that she did not have long to live that made her the composer she was. After becoming, at the age of 19, the first woman ever to win the Prix de Rome – the most coveted composition prize France had to offer – she devoted her few remaining years to coming to terms, through her music, with her expectation of an early death. A unique, modally inflected language – developed independently of the harmonic rules she had learned at the Paris Conservatoire, though not without some influence from Fauré and Debussy – was inspired by an exceptional creative situation.

D'un matin de printemps ('On a morning in spring') and its companion orchestral piece *D'un soir triste* ('On a sad evening') were completed in the last year of the composer's life, probably in January 1918. There is no conclusive evidence as to which of the two was written first, but it is impossible to escape the feeling that *D'un soir triste* is a dying composer's unhappily realistic commentary on the all-too-transient radiance of *D'un matin de printemps*.

The main theme of *D'un matin de printemps*, introduced by flutes against a lightly articulated ostinato in the upper strings, is a positively cheerful little tune in carefree dotted rhythms. As it passes to the harp, a solo cello offers a graceful variant, and the two melodies are developed in resourceful and colourfully-scored counterpoint. In the middle section, inspired by expressive solo strings, the orchestra takes a more poetic and increasingly passionate view of springtime nature, only to be cut short by muted horn and trumpet eager to restore the initial activity. Instead of reintroducing the main theme immediately in its original form and its original key, however, Lili teasingly reserves that event for the main climax of the piece, not long before its explosive ending.

Programme notes

Lili Boulanger

1893–1918

Faust et Hélène

1913

The text prescribed for the Prix de Rome competition in the year Lili Boulanger won the first prize was a 'lyric episode' by Eugène Adénis allegedly based on Part Two of Goethe's *Faust*. In fact, it has scarcely anything to do with Goethe. It reduces the allegorical marriage of Goethe's Faust and Helen to a superficially brief encounter spookily ended by the intervention of the jealous ghost of her Trojan lover, Paris. The most extraordinary quality of Lili Boulanger's setting of Adénis's *Faust et Hélène* – completed, according to the rules of the competition, in four weeks of isolation at the Palais de Compiègne in the summer of 1913 – is that it restores a deeper meaning to the theme.

Boulanger could have approached Adénis's text entirely on its own terms. Indeed, in the central love scene between Faust and Helen, she missed no opportunity to demonstrate that she had the skill and the inspiration to challenge even Massenet in seductive melody and voluptuous harmony. There is, however, another level to the score expressed in a different, overtly Wagnerian, operatic language. From the beginning, a chromatically sinister *leitmotif* (a recurring theme representing a person or idea) casts a dark shadow over a tonally uncertain orchestral introduction, and a premonition of disaster runs through the work. That unsettling motif rises frequently to the surface while the uncertain tonality, coinciding with the negative harmonic quality represented by Méphistophélès, offsets the radiant major keys of the love scene and ultimately confirms their unreality.

The first recall of the introductory *leitmotif*, now representing Faust's ill-fated desire for Helen, occurs on violins after he awakens from a blissful dream about her and enters his vocal line with a fervent appeal, 'Viens à travers les temps, viens à travers les âges'. The ecstatic melodic curve of his 'Hélène au front de lys', immediately echoed by a solo violin, introduces another, contrasting *leitmotif* into the drama. This new 'Helen' motif is heard again on oboe and flute over rippling harps as Méphistophélès uses his magic powers to summon her from the past, and then on violins as, most reluctantly, she appears before them.

Faust's strategy in winning Helen is to coax her out of her tonal neutrality by means of a lyrical line and caressing major harmonies, and it proves to be a gradual process crowned eventually by a passionate duet in E major. It is interrupted, however, by a shrill storm and a chillingly sombre march in E-flat minor of the ghosts of all those warriors who died for Helen of Troy. A dramatic trio, for Méphistophélès and the threatened lovers, is cut short by the spectral intervention of Paris and the disaster foreshadowed from the beginning. The sinister *leitmotif* is heard for the last time on Méphistophélès's pronouncement of 'Sur nous malheur' ('Woe betide us').

Boulanger programme notes by Gerald Lerner, reprinted courtesy of Chandos Records Ltd.

Surtitles operated by Andrew Kingsmill. Translation by Mark Valencia, with thanks to Chandos Records Ltd.

Interval – 20 minutes

An announcement will be made five minutes before the end of the interval.

Programme notes

Igor Stravinsky

1882–1971

The Rite of Spring

1913

Part I: The Adoration of the Earth

Introduction

The Augurs of Spring (Dances of the Young Girls)

Ritual of Abduction

Spring Rounds

Ritual of the Rival Tribes

Dance of the Earth

The Adoration of the Earth

Dance of the Earth

Part II: The Sacrifice

Introduction

Mystic Circles of the Young Girls

Glorification of the Chosen One

The Summoning of the Ancestors

Rituals of the Ancestors

Sacrificial Dance

It would be difficult to point to one single element of the spectacle that took place at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées in Paris on the evening of 29 May 1913 (the first performance of *The Rite of Spring*) and say that it caused particular offence – offence enough, for example, to spark a riot. There would have been features of the production, both musical and visual, that shrieked of barbarism and modernity, but it was more the overall combination of sound and staging that provoked a certain faction of the audience into outrage.

A brawl necessitates confrontation though, and there were almost as many present in the audience who supported and enjoyed the technical advances of Igor Stravinsky and his choreographer Vaslav Nijinsky as those who overtly disliked them. Moreover, *The Rite of Spring* had been preceded by two scores from Stravinsky, *The Firebird* and *Petrushka*, which posed similar musical views of Russian peasant culture and folksong – it was a compositional tradition dating back to Rimsky-Korsakov and the Czarist composers. But

Programme notes

whilst *The Firebird* and *Petrushka* remained within reach of tradition, *The Rite of Spring* seemed, in the words of Stravinsky biographer Percy Young, 'to tear the whole structure of music apart'.

The narrative of a pagan ritual in which a chosen girl danced herself to death in propitiation of the god of spring was literally dreamt by Stravinsky in 1910 whilst he was at work on *Petrushka*. After discussion with the Ballet Russes boss Serge Diaghilev and the painter Nicolas Roerich, Stravinsky worked on a scenario and then a score in 1911–12, apparently experiencing many difficulties notating the music. But elements of it came easily to him at the piano, most notably the adjacent chords of E major and E flat major which are the basis of the thick, dissonant chord shot through with irregular, swiping rhythmic emphases that is machined out repeatedly in the 'Dances of the Young Girls' (which follows the piercing woodwind tangles of the Introduction). This striking passage summarises some of the musical advances of the piece in microcosm: not only are the conventions of harmonic relationships rendered irrelevant by Stravinsky's combination of the chords of E and E flat, but the composer creates a soundscape which, whilst driven by a stamping pulse, is also audibly lacking a discernable time signature; there's no regular rhythmic emphasis from which one can ascertain the division of the music into 'bars'. Stravinsky had transformed the essentially urban, cultural institution that is 'the orchestra' into a primitive, de-humanised being, devoid of any sense of traditional musical sentimentality.

In these stamping rhythms we glimpse something of the barbarism of Nijinsky's choreography, which was lost in its original notation but reconstructed by the BBC for a television drama in 2006. Nijinsky had his dancers twist their feet inwards and pivot movements from the centre of their bodies (the pelvis) rather than their feet. Their jerking, twisting movements were as vivid, unorthodox and 'pagan' as much of Stravinsky's music, whilst their circular formations carried extra ritual weight.

The dramatic narrative of the ensuing sections is implied by Stravinsky's titles; 'The Adoration of the Earth' concludes with blazing brass and percussion and a huge orchestral *crescendo* which builds to silence, whilst 'The Sacrifice' begins with slowly undulating winds atop muted strings before a girl is chosen, glorified, and danced to death with a continuous pulse tormented by terrifying orchestral salvos, placed alongside fragmented gasps whose tectonics are shifted by alternate thumps on two timpani.



‘Very little immediate tradition lies behind *The Rite of Spring* – and no theory. I had only my ear to help me; I heard and I wrote what I heard. I am the vessel through which *The Rite* passed.’

– Igor Stravinsky

Throughout *The Rite*, Stravinsky uses distinctive Russian folk themes, often given flight by the equally clear sonorities of woodwinds (which Stravinsky favoured over strings for this purpose due to them being ‘drier, cleaner, less prone to facile expressiveness’). These melodies – or rather melodic fragments rarely longer than a few beats in length – are placed together to create patterns rather than combined in a traditional polyphonic sense to achieve smooth counterpoints. Stravinsky scholar Stephen Walsh has also pointed to the ‘transparency’ of Stravinsky’s dissonance: the ingredients of the chords are discernable, and the

Programme notes

rhythmic techniques, described by Stravinsky as 'lapidary', bring a similarly natural feel to the sound, 'the closeness of men to the earth' for Stravinsky, 'the community of their lives with the soil'.

Though it unleashed decades of innovation in music, *The Rite of Spring* is in many ways Stravinsky's stripping-down of music's assumed rules and habits; an imagining of a pre-Christian world through pre-historic music that took its rhythm and sound from the earth. More than either youthful rule-breaking or fashion-led innovation, *The Rite's* sole purpose is the conveying of its subject matter. Unfortunately for Nijinsky and the world of dance, it's often deemed sufficient a depiction of its narrative in concert form alone, and is almost impossibly demanding of any attached choreography.

Programme note © Andrew Mellor

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Karina Canellakis

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**Saturday 25 October 2025,
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Mozart Masonic Funeral Music,
K477
Mozart Piano Concerto No. 25
in C major, K503
Rachmaninov Symphony No. 2
Karina Canellakis conductor
Paul Lewis piano

New World Symphony

**Wednesday 29 October 2025,
7.30pm**

Chinary Ung Water Rings
Sibelius Violin Concerto
Dvořák Symphony No. 9
(From the New World)

Kahchun Wong conductor
Himari violin

A Sea Symphony

Friday 31 October 2025, 7.30pm

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